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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is designed to show why there are many advantages in a harmonized approach to the training of archivists, librarians, and specialists in information science and what these advantages are. Following introductory discussions of the concept of harmonization, a brief history traces Unesco's role in training information professionals in collaboration with non-governmental international organizations such as the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). In addition, the advantages of harmonization of training for government authorities, professional schools, and professional associations are discussed and summarized; and 10 areas are identified as appropriate for a harmonized approach to teaching: (1) the notion of information; (2) information policies; (3) systems analysis; (4) administration and management; (5) user studies; (6) documentary analysis; (7) exploitation of information sources; (8) conservation; (9) technology; and (10) research methods. It is concluded that professional associations, schools, and government authorities should work towards promoting a harmonized approach to training information professionals. (KM)

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HARMONIZATION OF TRAINING IN LIBRARIANSHIP, INFORMATION SCIENCE AND ARCHIVES

Library, information and archive services are responsible, each one in its own particular way, for the acquisition, organization, communication and conservation of recorded information. They have to preserve, collect, evaluate, analyse and make available the information that their collections contain.

These services were set up to meet the administrative and scientific needs of their respective users and the information they handle reflects these users' past, present and future needs.

They exist as part of an institution, an establishment, a government department or other organization to which they are attached. This attachment stamps the services they offer and their management with a specific character.

Each of these services has an important role to play for development, both in education, culture, administration and research and in economic growth and industrial, scientific and technological progress.

Information is now vital for the proper functioning of any modern society, whatever its level of development. It is a recognized fact that it is an essential national resource. The present trend is increasingly to promote the coordination of documentation, library and archive services within a national information network or system so as to avoid any duplication and to make up for any deficiency.

The emergence of an information industry has made it essential to study and evaluate the needs of users. This means that libraries, information and archive services must provide an active and complementary service, adapted to the users' habits and needs.

The training of information professionals must reflect this profound social change. The training schools must turn out librarians, specialists in information science and archivists who are capable of setting up, developing and managing libraries and information and archive services which are adapted to the technological facilities and the expectations of users.

DOES HARMONIZATION IMPLY A MERGING OF THE DIFFERENT DOCUMENTATION PROFESSIONS?

The purpose of this pamphlet is to show why and how there are many advantages in a harmonized approach to the training of archivists, librarians and specialists in information science. Our intention is not to try to promote the idea that these three professions should merge into one. The objectives, work and training of

archivists, librarians and specialists in information science remain separate from each other although they still need to be defined in a way that is acceptable to all.

A harmonized approach does not mean identical training for all; it is simply a move to seek what these different professions have in common so as to facilitate the exchange of ideas, the more rational use of teaching resources and a better organization of professional work and even, if possible, to increase the influence of these professions on government authorities or on society in general. The specific nature of each of these professions must obviously be preserved and, if a harmonized approach were to lead to their being confused, it should immediately be abandoned.

Each country, depending on its historical, cultural, economic or political traditions, has institutions, organized in different ways, for handling information and documents and providing specialist training. There is no purpose in wanting artificially to disrupt these traditions and institutions. But in many countries with very limited resources, the harmonized approach should help to reveal more economical and more profitable solutions to training problems.

STEPS TOWARDS THE HARMONIZATION OF TRAINING OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

Since its foundation, Unesco has been involved in the problems of training information professionals – librarians, archivists and specialists in information science. In this matter, it works in close collaboration with non-governmental international organizations such as the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

At the Intergovernmental Conference on the Planning of National Documentation, Library and Archives Infrastructures, held at Unesco in Paris in 1974, consideration was given to the different aspects of grouping together, in one setting, training courses for librarians, archivists and information science specialists. It was noted that with this arrangement, which is a necessity in developing countries, duplication and overlapping of the different subjects taught and of administrative infrastructures, as well as the creation of artificial barriers, could be avoided.

The establishment of the General Information Programme by a decision of the General Conference of Unesco at

its nineteenth session, in Nairobi in November 1976, underlined the fact that Member States were conscious of the need for closer co-operation between different information professions and for harmonious relations between the different national and international services and institutions which provide users with information.

In November 1979, Unesco organized a meeting of experts on the harmonization of archival training programmes, which examined this question in relation to training in librarianship and in information science. In May 1980, ICA, FID and IFLA held a joint meeting in Bellagio, Italy, on the same subject, to determine to what extent joint or common action by the three organizations was possible or desirable. It was stressed that the question of training must, first and foremost, concern the needs of users and of the planners and organizers of information services. The training committees of the three organizations met in Frankfurt, in the Federal Republic of Germany, in December 1980, after the Bellagio meeting, to establish co-operation among themselves and to implement a common programme of activities.

A working meeting of the training committees of the three organizations was held in Vienna, Austria, in 1983, on the teaching of management to information professionals. This meeting recommended that a common-core syllabus should be drawn up with an initial emphasis on management studies. Those attending the meeting were convinced that the professional organizations which they represented should join forces to work out an integrated approach to educational and training problems and give their support to regional and international meetings on the harmonization of training programmes, for which the backing of Unesco was desirable.

In October 1984, Unesco organized, in Paris, an international symposium on the harmonization of education and training programmes in information science, librarianship and archival studies. This meeting of experts took into account the progress made in this field by the main international organizations and its objective was to give prominence to the subjects which were best suited to the common training of information professionals. This symposium was a big step forward in the pursuit of this objective.

Since the holding of this symposium, Unesco has made a point of giving its support, in collaboration with ICA, FID and IFLA, to achieving harmonization in a variety of ways, e.g. promotional activities, preparation of teaching materials and consultations of Member States. Joint seminars on topics connected with harmonization – management (Varna, Bulgaria, 1985), preservation and conservation (Vienna, Austria, 1986) – have been held.

WHOM DOES HARMONIZATION CONCERN?

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

In many countries, the need to make the best of constantly insufficient resources has caused governments to take charge of several sectors of activity. This was the consideration that led Unesco to put forward the concept of a national information system, in which the different components – archives, libraries and documentation services – were considered as a whole and co-ordinated in the light of development prospects. It is generally the responsibility of government authorities to plan for the manpower needs of the different professional categories, provide training facilities and determine the status, remuneration and career profiles of specialists in the civil service and, sometimes, in other sectors.

In all these professions, the decision-makers, in consultation with specialists, can take advantage of the possibilities that a harmonized approach offers, e.g. economy of resources where training, status, remuneration and career profiles are similar, co-ordination of major investment and costs, such as those connected with buildings, equipment for conservation, computers, joint administrative and logistic support expenses, etc. It is here that one can fully appreciate the way in which two categories of information can complement each other i.e. information stemming, on the one hand, from administrative decisions and, on the other, from studies and research conducted inside or outside a given country.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Specialists in librarianship, information science and archives are a vitally important factor in the setting up of national information facilities and the development of information services. The training of these specialists is an integral part of a national information system and is becoming a priority for national decision-makers. For their part, the schools should ensure that the training given meets the needs, present and future, of the country in question. The quantitative aspects of the question (how many specialists?) are as important as the qualitative ones (what kind of specialization?). In this context, harmonization of training in librarianship, information science and archives often appears to be a practical and attractive solution, especially at the professional level.

Harmonization does not mean the merging or total integration of the different kinds of training but their interrelation, coexistence and collaboration. Its aim is to avoid the duplication of premises and makes it possible to suggest a basic course for information professionals, that is, the teaching of an agreed body of theoretical and practical knowledge, at university level, before specialization proper.

One of the greatest problems in the training of the different information professionals is the constitution of a competent and stable professional body, even in developed countries. This problem is more acute in the developing countries. Limited resources, both human—teaching personnel—and economic—to meet the expensive running costs of the training schools—must, therefore, be used in the best way possible.

In developing countries, because the number of professionals is small, the schools have brought librarians, information specialists and archivists together in one and the same system. Several cases could be cited where harmonization has become a reality, in varying degrees (Ghana, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal). Some developed countries could also be mentioned (Australia, Canada, Japan and the United Kingdom), although all sorts of difficulties have sometimes made it impossible to go as far as originally desired. Once again, it needs to be stressed that harmonization is not a panacea for each and every training problem and must not be artificially imposed.

The advantages of harmonized training are numerous. To begin with, the premises, the specialized library, computer and audiovisual equipment are available to the various categories of students. It makes it possible to centralize the selection of students and the management of their studies as well as to use the teaching staff in a more rational way. For developing countries, greater harmonization of training methods and programmes is the only way of improving the qualifications of the documenation professions, of upgrading their professional status and of training personnel who are both specialized and versatile. Developing countries and countries with small populations are the ones that can undoubtedly derive greater benefit from these advantages.

AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional associations of librarians, information specialists and archivists are primarily interested in everything that affects the lives of their members, and professional training must be among their priorities. These

associations, the members of which are serving professionals, examine possible solutions to the problems of the different disciplines and professions, and are bound to try to find the most appropriate ways of training professionals who can satisfy user needs and expectations.

The associations are ideal partners in the examination by schools of the problems relating to the training of the various information professionals at national level. They seek to promote libraries, information services and archives. Consequently, they must have an influence on the kind of training that the different professionals get. It goes without saying that the proposed solutions take into account the level of development, needs and capabilities of the country in question. Harmonization satisfies both the specific and complementary needs of information professionals and makes it possible to avoid an increase in the number of training facilities, especially in small and in developing countries. The co-operation of national associations is vital to the achievement of this objective.

ADVANTAGES OF HARMONIZATION OF TRAINING

Permits better use of facilities: reprographic, microfilming, audiovisual and computer equipment, library, classrooms, etc.

Permits better use of administrative resources: e.g. in the selection of students, course organization and school management in general.

Broadens the outlook of students and facilitates professional mobility.

Strengthens the representative nature of professional organizations in their dealings with third parties, e.g. public authorities (nationally and locally), educational circles, users.

APPROPRIATE AREAS FOR HARMONIZATION

There are quite a number of areas where a harmonized approach to teaching is possible. The following are not the result of an exhaustive study. They were chosen because, in addition to being of great importance in each of the professions in question, they are particularly well-suited to harmonization.

The notion of information

The professions and concerns of archivists, librarians and information specialists each have their own history, and their distinctive characteristics were established as they developed. National and international associations have all been instrumental in shaping the various information professions by organizing congresses and symposia, publishing journals and bulletins, and creating an intellectual context favourable to the growth of documentary information activities.

However, information science, librarianship and archives management all deal with the same thing, viz. information recorded in all kinds of media, or deferred information.

The study of information as a phenomenon forms the essential basis for harmonizing the different functions and promotes a deeper understanding of the fundamental concepts of documentary science. It makes it possible to see more clearly the relationship between the social institutions – libraries, archive services and documentation centres – and the professions – librarian, archivist and information specialist.

Information policies

To be able to use available resources in a better way, it is essential to have a general view, at national level, of the different services connected with information – archives, libraries and information systems and networks – and to plan their harmonious and co-ordinated development, having regard to national needs and priorities. It is the duty of government authorities, within the framework of a national policy, to legislate, standardize, plan, determine professional status, co-ordinate services such as access to materials, bibliographic control or retention of archives, and evaluate the satisfaction of users. Such action should lead to the resources of each country being appropriate to the ends sought. The importance accorded to the archives, library or documentation aspects of the national policy will vary according to whether priority is given to literacy, the preservation of the cultural heritage or to scientific and technological development. It is, therefore, essential that, from initial training onwards, these different aspects should be examined within this key context of the framing of a national information policy.

Systems analysis

As a methodological approach, systems analysis of course has applications in many disciplines. Whenever components have to be analysed, their interactions studied and feedback expected, this technique makes it

possible to systematize requests, discover aspects that were hitherto obscure and adopt optimal solutions in accordance with objectives and with the environment. The functions specific to archivists, librarians and documentalists lend themselves easily to this kind of analysis, either individually or as a whole, depending on the scale chosen. Being a highly flexible and effective instrument, systems analysis is an essential and even vital element of harmonized training.

Administration and management

In many professions, the day-by-day work consists essentially of planning, organizing and co-ordinating. The prominence given to management will determine the success, failure or inertia of information services, whether these are libraries, documentation centres or archive services.

The management of budgets, premises, staff and time, the drawing up of three-year or five-year plans and the setting up of systems, are all areas which are directly connected with administration and where harmonization could be applied, without altering the specific nature of the services concerned.

There could be a temptation to keep training in this field for those who will eventually hold top-level managerial posts, on the basis that only managers of information services need to concern themselves with management. Experience has shown, however, that administration is one of the important aspects of the running of a service and that the majority of staff ought to be more conversant with it. Courses in administration and management, adapted to the different levels of training, will make staff more sympathetic to the concerns of management, motivate them to a greater degree, and make them aware of promotion prospects, which could only be to their advantage.

User studies

Ever since it was recognized that the user is central to any communication and information process, user studies have become an essential part of training programmes. The user is certainly understood and recognized to a varying extent by information science specialists, librarians and archivists, as some services have to think in terms of decades or centuries and others in terms of hours.

Courses on user training are intended to encourage the maximum use of existing documentary resources. Unawareness of the advantages of information in any research process, ignorance of information sources and the

way in which they can be used, and, finally, the lack of clearly defined needs, are generally the reasons for underutilization of information services. Future information specialists must receive training which will enable them to identify the different types of users better and evaluate their needs so as to improve their capacity for research and their opportunities for getting hold of information.

User satisfaction is an essential element of any information service and evaluating the services makes it possible to assess the level of that satisfaction. Evaluations of the efficiency and performance of these services are also essential today, and the training schools must take account of this. The immediate satisfaction of users is certainly not always the prime concern, especially in the case of institutions whose chief function is conservation. It must be noted, however, that conservation can hardly be considered as an end in itself, and one is bound to ask what purpose a collection could serve that could never be used.

Documentary analysis

Anything that would facilitate access to information ought to be taken into consideration and given priority in all attempts at harmonization, as the final objective of a documentary service is to achieve a better use of information by the greatest number of people. The objective of documentary analysis – the process by which the contents of a document can be expressed in a form other than the original – is to develop aids to the finding of information. These aids – indexes, catalogues, finding aids, summaries, secondary publications – are invaluable working instruments for users and they could be made more efficient by employing the latest technology. Any harmonization of training programmes which highlighted this aspect could not fail to be beneficial as it would contribute to making information more accessible.

Exploitation of information sources

The exploitation of information is one of the ultimate goals of librarianship, archives and information science, each of which achieves it in a specific way, e.g. through a specialized documentation centre, general library or archive service.

Bibliography and reference are unavoidable concerns of librarians, archivists and information science specialists. The different information specialists must, in their work, know about the bibliographic organization of the various fields of knowledge as well as how to compile bibliographies. A better knowledge of how to use a library or a documentation centre and to carry out an effective

bibliographical search could be useful in archives research just as better knowledge of finding aids and of the principles of archives organization could be very useful for the processing of certain types of documents.

A great many aspects of the point of contact between user and information could be considered in greater detail, and the psychological aspects of this relationship, interview techniques and the evaluation of source validity concern the librarian, the information specialist and the archivist. The 'service' aspect of the work of information specialists could also be improved.

The new technologies, especially through remote searching of data banks and bases, have added a completely new dimension to the exploitation of information sources.

Conservation

Traditionally, because of the kind of information he is responsible for, the archivist has always attached the utmost importance to the conservation of that information, whatever the medium used. The establishment of standards for storage, for preventing the deterioration of or damage to the different media of information, and for sophisticated restoration techniques, has enabled the archivist to guarantee the conservation of archive materials with ever-increasing confidence. In some parts of the world, conservation has also created very specific problems for librarians. Knowing how to select what should be preserved and what should not implies the elaboration of selection criteria which will often be similar, if not the same, in the various professions.

Even if the information that librarians are responsible for is often kept for shorter periods than information in archives, it would be to their advantage and to that of the information science specialist to receive during their training, where necessary, some basic knowledge of this highly specialized subject. The study of the different kinds of media (paper, microfilm, photographs, video recordings, magnetic tape, video-discs, optical video-discs, digital video-discs, etc.), the way in which premises and storage facilities are designed, knowledge of equipment to safeguard against fire, theft, vandalism, bad weather and micro-organisms, the protection of essential documents – these are all examples of specific aspects of conservation which should be taken into account in any attempt to harmonize training programmes.

Technology

The specialist working in an information service must be familiar with the most common methods of reproduction (photocopying and duplication) and of micrography, which can be used for purposes as varied as security, substitution, complementarity or publication.

But of all the new technologies, computers are certainly the field to which priority should be given in training programmes as they are both a means of obtaining information and the best means of processing it.

The very rapid progress of the new technologies is making increasingly high-powered and increasingly inexpensive equipment available to professionals. The development of software, although slower, is also providing many opportunities. Its adaptability and cost mean that it can be considered for applications in the most varied situations.

Future executives should also be taught about the technological possibilities of telecommunications which, used in conjunction with computers, have already brought enormous changes in the organization, administration, technical services and user services of a great number of archive, library and documentation units.

Networks have been established and have multiplied nationally, regionally and internationally. Work is no longer distributed in the same way and international co-operation has developed considerably not only because of telecommunications but also because of the different 'value-added' services which improve their use.

Research methods

Information professionals have not always been able to lay down the theoretical basis of their activities, taken up as they are with the practical work of processing, storing and organizing information. Further, the lack of training, or insufficient training, in the research methods applicable to our fields of interest has not facilitated activities in this direction. The systematization of university or institutes of higher education training should contribute to the enrichment and renewal of concepts and theories.

Training must be oriented towards research, so that some of the professional graduates will be researchers or at least good users and shrewd evaluators of the research done in this field.

To the methods stemming from historical, descriptive and experimental studies have been added user studies,

research on services and systems evaluation, operations research, comparative research, content analysis and library research. Above all, a greater ability to identify problems and a knowledge of quantitative methods are essential if students are to make a contribution to a deeper knowledge of the discipline and profession. Only research can give a solid foundation to our disciplines.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

The context in which the field of information is evolving at present is one in which information has increased to a phenomenal degree and the resources which the most varied institutions are able or wish to devote to its organization and processing have been appreciably reduced. This is leading willy-nilly to rationalization, which will inevitably mean greater interaction between librarianship, archive and information science.

As far as the professional associations are concerned, their recent activities show that they wish to harmonize training programmes and have a common core area, and that in the final analysis, such a move would be in the interest of users and would not prejudice acknowledgement of the specific nature of the different professions.

The professional associations must promote an approach of this kind with their members and those with whom they deal. The schools, which are responsible for what professional practice will be in years to come, must, without delay, take the practical measures necessary for a harmonized approach to training. Finally, government authorities should take account of this and adopt the necessary political and legislative measures.

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Documents in preparation

International reader in the management of library, information and archive services.

Principes directeurs pour l'enseignement du marketing dans le domaine des sciences de l'information.

Principes directeurs pour la rédaction d'objectifs d'apprentissage en bibliothéconomie, sciences de l'information et archivistique.

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